

Dead Horse 10th Anniversary 2010

DISPATCH

A newsletter by and for the volunteers of Dead Horse Ranch State Park



Volunteer Gary Munson might well deny it but he is responsible in part for terrific attendance at this year's Verde Birdie Family Day. Gary was key in organizing a group of Dead Horse Ranch volunteers to man (person?) information booths at Safeway, Fry's, Ace, Sears and Walmart during March and April.

While the volunteers were letting people know about everything the park offers, they were also handing out flyers about the Bird Festival family day. In addition, through a contact of Gary's, 2,500 Family Day flyers were sent home with school kids in the Cottonwood area. A brochure created by Nan Hephner for the booth told of the many activities at the park, and was also distributed at the booth. This push to get information about the park and the festival to the public was a first for the park, and it paid off with record-breaking attendance, more visitation and increased sales of annual passes. Gary reports that booth volunteers made contact with 4,566 people, many of whom had never been to the park. While the booth program will end May 1, it may continue at another time. Thanks, Gary! Take a bow.



"Do birds have teeth?" This little one ponders the question at the duck pond. When she came up with the right answer, she chose a duck and received the prize indicated on the bottom from volunteer Maryan Pharo.



Before the kids arrived, a few adult birders were encouraged to give the frog launcher a try, as volunteer Maryan Pharo looks on. Two frogs are actually airborne in the photo. Can you find them?



Volunteer Laurie Blitsch reprised her role as Spider Lady, helping the kids release the cord at just the right moment to land on a fly. The huge green spider had to be



Volunteer Frank Larramore handed out free tickets to each family member who came to the Family Day of the 10th Annual Verde Valley Birding and Nature Festival

dropped just right in order for the spider to catch a fly on the spinning web. These games are not only immensely popular with the kids and parents who attend, they are fun for all of us. Thanks, Eric. Many folks commented on what a great family event this is, getting better every year, thanks to the organizational skills of Volunteer Barbie Hart, who went so far as to bring her motor home to the event, so she was available for any need, from scissors to bottled water.





Volunteer Norm Hephner bravely holds a nail while a young man hammers his bird house together.

The chance to make and take home bird houses and oriole feeders was a real treat for the kids. In fact, it soon was made clear that two tables and volunteers Norm Hephner and Jim Harris were no match for the crowd, so volunteers Carl Hartman and Gary Munson were recruited to assist.



Volunteer Rose Larramore helped a tot choose colors for her dragonfly.



Mrs. Bee (Rebecca Buzonas) handed out buttons to kids of all ages.



"Can you help me please?"



Most of the kids had never had an opportunity to use a cordless screwdriver so Jim Harris lends a hand. Parents were a big help too, as seen above. The oranges were provided for the oriole feeders. The bird house kits were donated by Home Depot.



(left) Volunteer Betty Wolters helped the kids make egg carton critters. (right) Big brother helped little brother make a pine cone feeder. Volunteer Nan Hephner helped mainly by cleaning up the sticky mess after each visitor, and trying to keep enough peanut butter available for the many visitors. The bird seed was donated by 3-D.



Sam Huselton, AZ G&F, with Turkey Vulture sunning himself. Below, Nan Hephner observing the preparation of a Pine Cone Feeder.



These birds and others were displayed by AZ Wildlife Center at the Verde Birdie Festival this year. (right) is a Black-crowned Night Heron. (middle) a Burrowing Owl came out to stare at visitors to the various vendor booths in the big tent. (left) a Red-Tail Hawk struck a regal pose, flaring its red tail for the cameras.



Classes of all kinds were provided at the bird festival. There were also field trips to a variety of locations, clean-ups, ecology walks, exhibits and trade show, workshops and owl prowls at night.



Mary Ontiveros, USFS, patiently worked on two different crafts with the kids, quail calls and paper hummingbirds created in metallic shades. Again, parents helped, making it all a fun family day.



Zen Mocarski, AZ G&F, is armed with a great personality and models of insects and reptiles. He held the rapt attention of his multi-aged audience.





During the Verde Valley Birding & Nature Festival, one of our tour leaders spotted a Black-crowned Night Heron tangled in fishing line on the south side of the Verde River. Ranger Justin Swiger and Manager Les Bovee located the bird and released it from the fishing line. You can see the tip of the right wing is a little tattered from the monofilament. The Heron was tired, but was strong enough to fly across the river. We are sure he'll be around to delight DHRS Park visitors for some time to come.

submitted by Les Bovee



A big hit at the Verde Valley Birding and Nature Festival this year was the nesting of a pair of Great Horned Owls. Daddy owl keeps an eye on the nest from high in the same cottonwood tree as the nest, as folks with cameras and binoculars looked on from below.



The nest was a cluster of branches, but fluff is visible at the top. The baby owls are beginning to get feathers, and those who watched the nest for long periods of time said there are two babies. The tree is located along the river in the Lower Day Use Area.



Volunteer Nan Hephner helps the little girl to make a Pine Cone Feeder. Left is Mary Ontiveros, USFS, helping children work on crafts.



Volunteer Maryan Pharo at the Duck Pond Quiz.



Volunteer Jim Harris helps the young ones and the parents building bird houses.



Volunteer Frank Larrimore is kept busy all day issuing tickets for the Kid's Events.

Popular New Game

Two popular games at the Bird Festival were the Frog Launcher and the Spider Drop. Volunteer Coordinator Eric Buzonas, and his love of new games and fun for kids, is largely responsible for both projects, which were huge successes. Over 250 tickets were turned in at the frog launcher, which debuted last year. Volunteer Bob Akey built the spider machine this year.



Eric and the women in his life - his bride, Rebecca & sister, Nancy.



Volunteer Carl Hartman helps a young man hammer his bird house.



Volunteer Gary Munson helping her with bird feeder construction.



SpiderLady, Laurie Blitsch, and Ranger Eric Buzonas show the little girl how to play Spider Drop.